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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/19/2016
TAGS: BN VT EAGR EAID TBIO ECON
SUBJECT: VATICAN OFFICIAL INTERESTED IN BENIN BIOTECH

REF: VATICAN 218

CLASSIFIED BY: Peter G. Martin, Political Officer, Embassy
Vatican, State.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) During a recent EB-sponsored speakers program, Emboff and visiting U.S. researchers met with Monsignor Jean Laffitte, Vice President of the Pontifical Academy for Life, to discuss the potential of agricultural biotechnology and the promise it holds for Africa. Laffitte was concerned when our speakers told him that African governments were doing little or no research on the subject, and were not open to testing GMO seeds being developed by NGOs.

¶2. (C) Laffitte expressed particular interest in the situation in Benin, where he teaches for a few months each year at the Jean Paul II Institute on Marriage and Family. He was a particularly enthusiastic proponent of agricultural biotech, and criticized the anti-GMO stance of some of his fellow Catholics. Laffitte (a Frenchman) told us that he would discuss the benefits of agricultural biotechnology with his peers and government contacts in Benin when he travels there in 2007. He is also open to meeting with a representative from Embassy Cotonou when he next travels there; dates are not set for 2007. Post can facilitate contact between Embassy Cotonou and/or the Department and Laffitte if desired. POC: PAO Mary Kane or Political Officer Peter Martin.

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